
UN human rights chief says sanctions on Iran and others should be urgently re-evaluated

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Geneva, March 25 (RHC)-- Sanctions should be revisited or suspended altogether during the COVID-19 crisis, the UN human rights chief has said, arguing that they might cause healthcare in affected countries to collapse, and harm the situation globally.

Any international and unilateral sanctions should be “urgently re-evaluated,” UN Human Rights Commissioner Michelle Bachelet said Tuesday. “It is vital to avoid the collapse of any country’s medical system – given the explosive impact that will have on death, suffering and wider contagion,” Bachelet said in a statement.

In a context of global pandemic, impeding medical efforts in one country heightens the risk for all of us. the sanctions have already damaged Iran’s ability to procure crucial equipment, including respirators and protective suits needed to fight the deadly disease. Apart from the scale of the outbreak in the country, the shortages might be behind the high death toll among its healthcare workers. The standing “variety of sanctions” against nations such as Cuba, North Korea, Venezuela and Zimbabwe could impede their medical efforts as well, Bachelet added.

“The majority of these states have frail or weak health systems. Progress in upholding human rights is essential to improve those systems -- but obstacles to the import of vital medical supplies, including over-compliance with sanctions by banks -- will create long-lasting harm to vulnerable communities,” she said.

Edited by Ed Newman